



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Rural Mother Changes Lives with Better Chickens



Save the Children

Beseatu Mofida with three of her children and her chicken coop provided by Feed the Future.

Married for half of her life, Beseatu Mofida, 30, became the sole breadwinner for her family when her husband was paralyzed in a car accident. Living in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia, Mofida and her young children survived on eating *enset*—a fruit locally known as “false banana” that is a staple food of low nutrient quality—flavored with chili. Mofida knew her children were poorly fed and had difficulty concentrating in school, but she lacked opportunities to increase her income in her rural village.

In February 2012, when her youngest, Ramate Mohe, was just nine months old, a Feed the Future project, Empowering New Generations to Improve Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (ENGINE), selected Mofida and her family to participate in poultry and homestead gardening interventions aimed at improving maternal and child nutrition within the first 1,000 days spanning the time from pregnancy till a child turns two.

To improve her children's diet diversity, Mofida received 10 hens and two cockerels. These chickens were healthier, better able to withstand disease, and produced more eggs, an improvement over the ones she had raised in the past. Mofida also received training on poultry management and learned to prepare homemade feed by mixing nutritious ingredients. One of the feed ingredients, *nougcake*, was not readily available in the local market, so Feed the Future and the district agricultural office facilitated the logistics to introduce *nougcake* to the area. Every day at 6 a.m., Mofida dedicatedly cleans the coop and provides the flock with fresh water and feed. She also allows the hens to graze to improve the vitamin A content of their eggs, a strategy to prevent a common micronutrient deficiency among children in the region.

Since the intervention, Mofida's hens produce more than enough eggs for her family to consume, allowing her to sell the excess. With this new income, she purchases iodized salt, meat, cereals for *injera*, and coffee as well as household items. Thanks to the homestead garden seeds she received from Feed the Future, new vegetables have been introduced to the household, and she mixes and prepares these vegetables using recipes from cooking demonstrations organized by the Feed the Future project. “I don't have to worry about buying vegetables now,” she said. “I grow everything I need here in my own garden.”

By sharing produce and insights on poultry management with her neighbors, Mofida has grown into a leader among her community members. Many neighbors own local chickens known for their brooding rather than their egg laying. Every 18 months, as the chickens age, the flock's egg production decreases. So Mofida replaces them by hatching 12 eggs, and she sells the cockerels to her neighbors, knowing that breeding the cockerels with local-breed hens increases the chances of producing healthier chickens.

Other women in the community have joined Mofida in creating a village savings group to bridge their financial security from the productive season through the rainy season, when egg production is at its lowest. Mofida is well on her way toward her goal of saving enough for the entrance fee to the local microfinance institution so that, in the future, she may receive a microenterprise loan.

Save the Children is leading the implementation of ENGINE, a Feed the Future project of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). ENGINE is USAID's flagship multi-sector nutrition project, which aims to improve the nutritional status of Ethiopian women and children through sustainable, coordinated, and evidence-based interventions, enabling them to lead healthier and more productive lives.